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[Redacted]  
Washington, D. C. 20010

The Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43rd Street  
New York, New York 10036

Dear Sir:

The Times' lead editorial of August 6 entitled "Bloodbath in Binh-dinh..." makes a misleading analogy between the recent reports of Communist public executions in Binhdinh Province and an allegation that "9820 civilian Communists were executed" by the South Vietnamese. The source of the latter is given as testimony before a House subcommittee last year, which is presumably that taken by the House Foreign Operations and Government Information Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations. Since I was the source of most of the statistics in those hearings and was a principal witness, I must point out your editorial writer's totally inexact statement that this testimony reported the "execution" of civilian Communists.

The specific number of 9820 covered the year 1970 and the first two months of 1971. These figures were updated in my own testimony to cover the additional months through May. In this testimony, I clearly stated that the Government of Vietnam's campaign against the Communist infrastructure was measured by members captured, rallied or killed. Of those killed, I indicated that almost 90 percent were killed in the course of military actions and the remainder in fighting off arrests by police or other forces. While I said that some unjustifiable abuses had occurred in the fight against Viet Cong terrorism over the years, I plainly pointed out that the instances of abuse were small in number. Your editorialist totally ignored this testimony when he asserted that the total of those reported as "killed" were "executed."

We who have worked with the Vietnamese to help them to defend themselves against Communist terrorism and military assault are well aware of the costs that all Vietnamese have paid. It does them a dis-service, however, to change verbs in the manner of your editorialist and to ignore evidence such as the Binhdinh refugee's statement quoted in your August 10 issue that "Our presence here shows our choice" of which Vietnamese government he preferred.

Sincerely,

W. E. Colby  
Former Deputy for Pacification, Saigon

The New York Times  
The Sunday Times

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## Bloodbath in Binhdinh . . .

The public execution of an estimated 250 to 300 Saigon officials and others by Communist forces during their occupation of Binhdinh Province adds another sordid chapter to the bloody history of the Vietnam war.

The executions, reported by allied intelligence officers and corroborated in on-the-spot interviews by a Times correspondent, expose once more the ruthless brutality which the Communists exhibited at Hue during their 1968 Tet offensive. Such barbaric tactics serve to undermine the prospects for a political accommodation in South Vietnam—the kind of accommodation the Communists say they are seeking in Paris.

Binhdinh has also been a principal target of the infamous "Phoenix" program, under which South Vietnamese counterterror teams—recruited, organized, supplied and paid by the C.I.A.—have sought to "neutralize" Communist cadres throughout the country. According to testimony before a House subcommittee last year, 9,870 civilian Communists were executed under this program in a fourteen-month period.

Both sides have committed calculated atrocities in South Vietnam, over and beyond the indiscriminate slaughter that inevitably results from the massive American bombing and Communist shelling that have dominated the latest round of fighting there. Bloody reprisals, like those that followed the unsuccessful Communist coup in Indonesia seven years ago, are indeed a gruesome possibility for postwar Vietnam, no matter which side "wins." But they can hardly be more terrible than the bloodbath the Vietnamese are suffering each day that this brutal war continues. The sooner both sides move toward a negotiated settlement, the better the chances will be for a relatively bloodless reconciliation.

## The Hidden War . . .

The shift from ground to air in the focus of American military activities in Indochina has meant a shift from urban bases in South Vietnam to combat groups operating from air bases in Thailand and cutters at sea. The result has been a drastic cut in the visibility of the war to the American people.

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years to shift jurisdiction in all other types of cases, but has yet to shift its first case. Just by way of making sure that record is kept intact for hospital workers, eight committee members have filed a separate statement emphasizing their belief that nothing in the new law does—or should—mandate a changed approach.

Without a clear-cut mandate for priority of state law, enactment of the present House bill would be an invitation to wholesale hospital strikes and an accelerated escalation of hospital costs.

## Welfare Reform S.O.S.

Welfare reform is apparently not an orphan after all. President Nixon's strong letter to the Senate urging that it not eviscerate the reform bill revives hope that he will not let the most innovative social proposal of his four years in the White House die without a struggle.

The President is right in believing that welfare reform will have no chance if the Senate strips away the politically palatable parts of the measure and incorporates them into the pending revenue-sharing bill. Too much damage has already been done by the earlier decision of both houses of Congress to divorce higher Social Security benefits from the omnibus bill for recasting welfare by putting a guaranteed annual floor under family income.

Mr. Nixon's renewed show of vigor in support of his three-year-old reform plan is accompanied by a hint from Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Richardson that the Administration may renew its suspended negotiations with Senate liberals, under the leadership of Senator Ribicoff of Connecticut, for improvements in the version of welfare reform already twice passed by the House of Representatives. A coalition in support of a compromise bill could insure constructive action this year to erase the damaging line between the working poor and those totally dependent on public assistance.

It is past time, as Secretary Richardson has declared, for Congress "to correct the conditions of misery imposed by the disgrace we mistakenly call a welfare system."

## Semi-Strip Filming

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